

Message Text

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47

ACTION AF-06

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R 201600Z JAN 75

FM AMEMBASSY CAPE TOWN

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4338

INFO AMEMBASSY GABORONE

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY LUANDA

AMEMBASSY MASERU

AMEMBASSY MBABANE

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY PRETORIA

AMCONSUL DURBAN

AMCONSUL JOHANNESBURG

USUN NEW YORK 961

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE CAPE TOWN 0074

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINT, WA

SUBJECT: NAMIBIA: SWAPO BOYCOTT OF OWAMBO ELECTION FAILS

1. RELIABLE SOURCE IN WINDHOEK HAS INFORMED EMBASSY THAT FIFTY-FIVE PER CENT OF 120,000 ELIGIBLE VOTERS WENT TO POLLS DURING JANUARY 13-17 ELECTIONS OF REPRESENTATIVES FOR OWAMBO LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL. IN OWAMBO ITSELF, 76 PER CENT (64,500) OF VOTERS TURNED OUT, WHILE IN "WHITE" AREAS, ONLY 1,500 (ABOUT 5 PER CENT) OF OVAMBOS VOTED. RESULTS SHOW THAT OVAMBO MIGRANT WORKERS, MOST OF WHOM LIVE IN COMPOUNDS, WERE EASILY REACHED BY SWAPO MEMBERS AND SUPPORTED SWAPO BOYCOTT OF ELECTION. IN "HOMELAND," HOWEVER, BOYCOTT FAILED.

2. SWAPO HAS CLAIMED THAT PEOPLE WERE TAKEN TO POLLING STATIONS

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IN GOVERNMENT VEHICLES AND THAT VOTERS WERE INTIMIDATED

BY AUTHORITIES. GOVERNMENT, ON OTHER HAND, CHARGES THAT SWAPO GUILTY OF ACTS OF INTIMIDATION. HOWEVER, NEITHER SIDE HAS PRODUCED ANY EVIDENCE TO SUBSTANTIATE ITS ALLEGATIONS. ONE FACTOR CONTRIBUTING TO FAILURE OF BOYCOTT COULD BE THAT MANY SWAPO ACTIVISTS HAVE FLED TO ZAMBIA.

3. COMMENT: SWAPO HAS SAID IT NOT INTERESTED IN ELECTION RESULT. HOWEVER, IN OUR VIEW, IT NOW IS GOING TO BE MORE DIFFICULT FOR SWAPO TO PROVE THAT IT HAS THE OVERWHELMING SUPPORT IT HAS CLAIMED TO HAVE THROUGHOUT NAMIBIA. SWAPO, AS WE HAVE NOTED BEFORE, IS ALMOST ENTIRELY AN OVAMBO ORGANIZATION AND AS SUCH ITS STRENGTH IN EVEN THAT ETHNIC GROUP MAY BE LESS THAN BELIEVED PREVIOUSLY. END COMMENT.

4. IN STORY FILED FROM OSHAKATI (ADMINISTRATIVE CAPITAL OF OWAMBO), RAND DAILY MAIL REPORTER STATES THAT NEW OWAMBO GOVT, WHICH ALMOST CERTAIN TO BE HEADED BY FORMER CHIEF MINISTER PHILEMAN ELIFAS, IS "PREPARING FOR INDEPENDENCE ON THE SAME LINES AS THE TRANSKEI." REPORTER SAID ELIFAS TOLD HIM ONE OF FIRST ACTS OF NEW GOVT WOULD BE TO APPROACH ANGOLAN GOVT TO ASK FOR CESSION OF SOUTHERNMOST AREA OF ANGOLA BORDERING OWAMBO IN WHICH INHABITANTS ARE MAINLY KWANYAMA OVAMBOS. REPORTER QUOTES OWAMBO GOVT OFFICIAL AS SAYING HE BELIEVED THAT THIS WOULD CONCLUDE WITH REQUEST FROM OWAMBO LEADERS TO SAG FOR INDEPENDENCE.

5. HOWEVER, ANOTHER REPORTER, CLIVE COWLEY, JOHANNESBURG STAR'S WINDHOEK CORRESPONDENT, ALSO TALKED TO ELIFAS AND GOT SOMEWHAT DIFFERENT STORY. COWLEY HAS TOLD US THAT ELIFAS DID NOT COMMIT HIMSELF WHEN ASKED WHETHER HE WOULD SEEK INDEPENDENCE FOR OWAMBO, AND SAID HE HOPED OWAMBO WOULD RETAIN ITS CURRENT RELATIONSHIP WITH REST OF TERRITORY AND COOPERATE CLOSELY WITH IT.

6. COMMENT: OUTCOME ELECTION COULD INDEED SPUR SAG, WITH COOPERATION OF ELIFAS GOVT, TO PUSH OWAMBO TO SEEK INDEPENDENCE. AS WE HAVE NOTED BEFORE, INDEPENDENCE FOR OWAMBO IS ONE OPTION THAT APPEARS TO BE ESPECIALLY APPEALING TO SAG. HOWEVER, SAG MAY BE INCLINED TO MOVE WITH MUCH MORE CIRCUMSPECTION THAN INDICATED BY MAIL ARTICLE. SINCE SECURITY COUNCIL RESOLUTION, LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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NAMIBIAN ISSUE HAS BECOME MORE PROMINENT AND DELICATE, AND SUDDEN LEAP TOWARD INDEPENDENCE FOR OWAMBO LIKELY TO DO GREAT DAMAGE TO EFFORT BY SAG TO CONVINCE AT LEAST SOME BLACK AFRICAN STATES THAT IT HAS GOOD INTENTIONS FOR NAMIBIA AND WILL LEAD IT INTO AN INDEPENDENCE SUPPORTED BY MAJORITY OF NAMIBIANS. HURD

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